



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Foundation for the National Archives Joins Archives' July 4th Celebration,
Welcoming Thousands to Home of Declaration of Independence**

John Hancock Financial, Dykema Gifts Support Patriotic Program

Washington, DC July 10, 2012 – The Foundation for the National Archives proudly joined its partners at the National Archives to present an exciting day of July 4th activities, welcoming thousands of visitors to the home of the original, official Declaration of Independence.

The annual Independence Day festivities, which included patriotic music, a dramatic reading of the Declaration from the National Archives steps, and free family activities, were made possible in part by the generous support of lead sponsor John Hancock Financial as well as the national law firm Dykema.

The National Archives' Independence Day celebration is a favorite starting point for thousands of visitors to the National Mall on July 4th each year. C-Span News Broadcaster Steve Scully served as this year's emcee, and Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero welcomed the crowd, which included many families who had stopped to sign a facsimile of the Declaration with a quill pen outside the Archives before joining the celebration on the Archives steps.

Chair and President of the Foundation for the National Archives A'Lelia Bundles delivered the keynote address in a ceremony built around family – literally, with descendants of the Declaration's signers reading from the historic document, and figuratively, as Bundles urged the crowd to embrace the larger family of the nation.

"Welcome to the BEST Fourth of July parade seat in America!" Bundles shouted to the cheering crowd.

Bundles, the great-great granddaughter of African American entrepreneur and philanthropist Madam C. J. Walker, noted that while the Founding Fathers included the words "all men are created equal" in the Declaration, the Declaration did not extend the same rights and liberties to women, African Americans, Native

Americans, or indentured servants. Yet those Americans embraced the Declaration and claimed its message and ideals as their own, she said.

“Beyond those doors at Independence Hall ... in small towns, in kitchens and on farms were our Founding *Mothers* and Founding *Citizens*,” she said. “They, too, had a stake in the outcome of the Revolutionary War.”

In researching her own family history at the National Archives, Bundles said, she discovered an African American ancestor who served during the Revolutionary War.

“I choose to claim the Fourth of July as my own ... It is mine. It is yours. And it is ours,” she said, adding that as Americans celebrate their nation’s birthday, they can turn to the Declaration and other founding documents of our democracy “as a framework for debate to settle conflicts and promote civility ... to seek common ground and common cause ... to work together to turn our ever-evolving, ever imperfect nation into a more perfect union.”

Further extending the family theme of the celebration, Bundles and Ferriero were joined on stage by four descendants of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The descendants -- Laura Belman, John Belman, Laura Murphy, and Michael Miller – read the Declaration, while historical re-enactors “Thomas Jefferson,” “John Adams,” and “Benjamin Franklin” read the colonists’ grievances against King George III. “Private Ned Hector” led the boisterous crowd in voicing the outrage of the colonists by booing the grievances, then read the names of each signer as the crowd cheered, “Huzzah!”

Musical entertainment was provided by the U.S. Army 3rd Infantry “The Old Guard” Fife and Drum Corps, while mezzo-soprano Olivia Vote of the Wolf Trap Opera sang *The National Anthem* and *America the Beautiful*. The National Independence Day Parade on Constitution Avenue along the National Mall began shortly afterward.

The public program on the steps of the National Archives followed the Foundation’s annual *Promise of America* breakfast and a private program and tours in the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom.

Several members of Congress and the Foundation’s Board joined Bundles, Executive Director Thora Colot, John Hancock’s Vice President of Government Relations Linda Watters, and Dykema CEO Peter Kellet and wife Laura, to participate in the program. Other special guests included U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and family; U.S. Rep. John Larson (D-Connecticut) and family; Deanna Horton, Minister of Congressional, Public & Intergovernmental Affairs for the Embassy of Canada; Foundation Board Officer Cokie Roberts, husband Steve Roberts, and family; Foundation Board member Riley Temple.

“John Hancock Financial was pleased to be able to support the National Archives and its Independence Day celebration again this year,” said Linda Watters, Vice President, John Hancock Financial. “The National Archives does a wonderful job with the festivities and in general to foster interest and learning about our country’s heritage.”

“Dykema is proud once again to have partnered with the Foundation for the National Archives and John Hancock Financial to help sponsor this year’s National Archives event,” said Peter M. Kellett, Chairman and CEO of Dykema. “We celebrate their efforts, not just on July 4th, but throughout the year. Through its partnership with the National Archives, the Foundation introduces millions of visitors to the records that chronicle the start of our democracy and helps them to appreciate more dearly the liberty and freedom we enjoy, and to learn anew what makes our nation great.”

About the Foundation for the National Archives

The Foundation for the National Archives is an independent nonprofit that serves as the National Archives’ private-sector partner in the creation of and ongoing support of the National Archives Experience, which includes permanent exhibits, educational programs, traveling exhibits, special events and film screenings, educational literature, and historical/records-related products and media. The Foundation helps the public understand the importance of the holdings of the National Archives by presenting the depth and diversity of the records through award-winning, interactive educational exhibits and programs. It generates financial and creative support for the National Archives Experience from individuals, foundations, and corporations who share a belief in the importance of innovative civics education.

About the National Archives Experience

The National Archives Experience, created by the National Archives in partnership with the Foundation for the National Archives, has transformed the visitor experience at the National Archives’ Washington, DC building, and includes a renovated Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom, the award-winning Public Vaults permanent interactive exhibition, the William G. McGowan Theater, the Lawrence F. O’Brien Gallery for special exhibits, the Boeing Learning Center, and the Digital Vaults online exhibit. These components make the rich resources of the National Archives accessible to Americans nationwide.

About John Hancock Financial and Manulife Financial Corporation

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